

Verification of TSP Certification Applications

A. Overview and Process

- (1) The TSP certification process includes a national application process and individual State-level certification criteria verification.
 - (i) Within 60 days of receiving an application for certification from an individual, private sector entity, public agency or American Indian Tribe, NRCS, in the State where the applicant resides (resident state), will determine whether the applicant meets the certification requirements by verifying:
 - (ii) Training, education, and experience;
 - (iii) Reference information;
 - (iv) Individual State requirements, licensing, etc.;
 - (v) That the applicant has not been de-certified;
 - (vi) That the applicant has signed the certification agreement (See Exhibit A).
- (2) The applicant must demonstrate on the application their familiarity with NRCS guidelines, criteria, standards, and specifications for which certification is sought.
- (3) For applicants who are applying for certification in more than one State, the resident State will verify compliance with the certification criteria and completeness of application as stated in B and will do one of the following:
 - (i) The resident State verifies that the applicant meets all certification requirements (training, education, experience, etc) plus any specific resident State requirements, and, within 30 days will notify by e-mail the other States in which the applicant has requested to become certified. The notified States will then verify the applicant meets specific State requirements and respond to the resident State within 30days (for a 60 day verification time frame); or
 - (ii) The resident State determines that the applicant does not meet certification requirements, and will immediately notify the other States where the applicant has requested certification (30 day maximum).
- (4) Once verification is complete NRCS will either:
 - (i) Certify applicant as a TSP and place the applicant on the approved TSP list; or
 - (ii) Notify applicant of missing information and request that the applicant provide additional information or that the applicant does not meet the requirements and that they must take action to meet requirements if certification is desired.
- (5) The maintenance and disposition of application verification records will be the responsibility of the resident State.

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B. Methodology for Verifying Certification Application

- (1) Applicants seek certification in a selected category based on a specific option which has various criteria. The terminology below explains key facets of information that will be reviewed in order to verify the certification application. (See Exhibit B)
 - (i) Category – the subject and types of technical service available for certification. The conservation practices associated with the service are listed. Currently TechReg includes 42 technical service categories. Proficiency requirements, which describe knowledge, skills or abilities required within each category, will be made a part of the category level.
 - (ii) Option – the different choices or avenues through which to become certified within the category. An applicant must satisfy at least one option for category certification. Currently the number of options range from one to 10 per category.
 - (iii) Criteria – the certification standards or requirements for specific options. All criteria within a chosen option must be met in order to be certified. NRCS will continue to evaluate criteria to make them more specific and to aid in the verification process.
 - (iv) There are five types of criteria that must be verified. Verification methods are suggested to States for their consideration in support of the national process outlined in Section A. Following is a listing and a brief description of common verification methods for each type:
 - (a) Licenses or Permits
 - Criteria refer to licenses (such as Engineers or Pesticide Applicators licenses) and permits (such as Cultural Resources Investigation permits).
 - Common Verification Methods
 - Publicly accessible via the Internet (See Exhibits C-C1)
 - Contact TSP for proof of license or permit
 - (b) Certifications
 - Criteria refer to certifications that may be national in scope or State specific. Some examples include Crop Advisors, Certified Conservation Planner, Nutrient Management, and Prescribed Burning.
 - Common Verification Methods
 - Publicly accessible via Certification Organization Web site (See Exhibits D and D1)
 - Direct contact with Agency/Organization who gave certification
 - Applicant provides proof of certification
 - (c) Education
 - Criteria refer to formal education or college degree.

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- Common Verification Methods
 - Applicant provides a copy of diploma
 - Applicant provides copy of transcript(s)
 - Contact University to verify degree

(d) Training

- Criteria refer to the training courses required by a specific option. Some of the courses are offered by NRCS such as Conservation Planning modules, and some are provided by external organizations such as the CNMP course.
- Common Verification Methods
 - Contact the Information Technology Specialist, National Employee Development Center (NEDC) (tracking system will be standardized) by telephone at (817) 509-3242 or send an e-mail to ssripameswaran@ftw.nrcs.usda.gov.
 - NRCS State office where modules were completed
 - Contact training organization
 - Applicant provides copy of training certificate or proof that they completed training

(e) Experience

- Criteria refers to work performed relative to the category that applicant seeks certification.
- Common Verification Methods
 - Contact References
 - Obtain knowledge about performance from local NRCS office
 - Interview applicant or associations to assess type of experience referenced in resume (See sample questions in Exhibit E)
 - Total or complete Resume documentation (currently needs to be defined in greater depth than what TechReg requires)
 - Applicant provides documentation of previous work performed

(f) References

- Criteria refer to persons or places with whom or where applicant has worked to provide technical service in the category for which they seek certification.
- Common Verification Methods
 - Interview customer references about work performed, types of technical services provided, and to verify working relationship.
 - May contact appropriate field offices to verify locations identified in reference
 - Letters from customer reference acknowledging work performed, types of technical services provided, and working relationship

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(2) Verification of TSP Certification Applicants Certified by Recommending Organization

- (i) NRCS has memorandums of understandings (MOUs) with various organizations whose members may have an interest in being TSPs. (See Exhibit F) Through these recommending organizations, members may meet complementary criteria necessary for becoming TSP certified.
- (ii) Criteria met through a recommending organization do not need to be verified by NRCS as the recommending organization takes on that responsibility. Every effort will be made to add the MOU organization as an option to a category and include only criteria that have not already been certified by the MOU organization (See Exhibit F1).

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit A – Technical Service Provider Certification Agreement

Exhibit B – Terminology Example from TechReg

Exhibit C – State License-Engineers: Texas Web site

Exhibit C1 – State License-Engineers: Illinois Web site

Exhibit D – ASA Certification Registry Web site

Exhibit D1 – Wildlife Society Certification Registry Web site

Exhibit E – Sample Interview Questions

Exhibit F – Sample MOU between NRCS and Recommending Organizations

Exhibit F1 – MOU Recommendation Organizations

Exhibit G – Verification Check Sheets

Exhibit H – Michigan Quality Assurance Procedure

Exhibit H1 – Michigan Quality Assurance Review Check Sheet

Exhibit I –Michigan TSP Registry Category